

ADDRESS OF THE RETIRING PRESIDENT *

BENJAMIN P. WATSON

ON December 31, 1950 my two years of office as your President came to an end. This has brought with it a sense of relief and at the same time one of regret, the latter far outweighing the former for, whilst your president must give much of his time and effort to his duties, there is more than ample compensation in the interest of the work and in the mental stimulus which comes of participating in the many activities which go on within these walls.

There are also outside interests for, occupying as it does an honored place in the community, The New York Academy of Medicine through its President and other officers is frequently called upon to participate in public functions and ceremonies. For me, the most notable and at the same time most terrifying of these was when I gave an address in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine at a full church service, commemorating the centenary of St. Luke's Hospital. That will always remain for me a vivid memory for it was the first time that I had, as the Scots put it, "wagged my heid in a pu'pit."

Other addresses which I have been called upon to give have come more within the range of my experience augmented as that has been by the briefing which I invariably asked for and never failed to receive from the Director and other officers of the Academy.

Whilst it is customary for the President to give a short account of the work done at the end of each of his two years of office it must be realized that our activities are not demarcated on a calendar basis but are a continuing performance. The permanency in office of the Director and Executive Secretaries, and the limited changes in the chairmanship and personnel of our standing committees make it possible to carry on all our accepted functions from year to year. To do that and at the same time prevent these from becoming mere repetitive routine requires constant watchfulness and a great deal of hard work on their part. And always there are new problems coming up calling for investigation; new challenges to be met; new methods to be explored and exploited. It is to some of the more recent of these that I shall call your attention.

* Given 4 January, 1951, at the Annual Meeting of The New York Academy of Medicine.

A few years ago the Committee on Medical Information, through its director, Dr. Iago Galdston made arrangements whereby the Lectures to the Laity were broadcast to the general public over radio station WNYC. Stimulated by the evident success of this venture they began, eighteen months ago, to explore the possibilities of making tape recordings of some of the scientific papers and round table discussions held here, having them transferred to discs and from these making FM broadcasts over a local station. Furthermore, it was envisaged that these discs might be made available to FM stations in other localities and to medical organizations and individuals all over the world for gramophone reproduction. Here was a new method for the transmission of medical knowledge.

A small subcommittee from the Committees on Medical Information and Medical Education was appointed with Dr. Norton Brown as Chairman. Thanks largely to his unremitting energy and that of Dr. Galdston the dream has been transformed into reality. The first FM broadcast "for doctors only" was made in January 1950. Since then there have been broadcasts of three series of eight lectures each, all of them originally delivered here. The broadcasts are made over WNYC-FM on a specified day each week and at a fixed time previously announced. They naturally reach a much larger audience than could ever assemble here, for already many doctors in and beyond the Metropolitan area are reserving this time, happy in the thought that they can have a quiet evening at home and also be acquiring knowledge of things new in medicine. Many laudatory letters from doctors have been received and requests for the discs have come from medical organizations from all over the world as well as from the State Department which has requested transcriptions for the Voice of America and for the Embassies and Consulates in countries carrying English programmes.

The Academy of Medicine may well be proud of this pioneering effort in medical education. It has been made possible only by the donation of time and service by radio station WNYC and by the whole-hearted support of its director, Mr. Seymour N. Siegel. We tender them our grateful thanks. Even with this generous contribution it is estimated that the additional cost to the Academy will be in the neighborhood of twenty-six thousand dollars a year. This addition to our budget will have to be met by new endowments, grants and donations. The committee has already enlisted some financial support but we must

look to the Fellows to help out by interesting public spirited individuals in the project.

As all of you know, there are few radio broadcasts of educational value, for these have little appeal to commercial sponsors of radio programmes. The New York Academy of Medicine therefore thought it right to join with other scientific, educational and cultural organizations in petitioning the Federal Communications Commission for reservation of at least 20 per cent of television channels for educational purposes. Unless such reservation is made now the vast possibilities of television as an educational medium may well be lost for the future. That it has such possibilities was demonstrated at our 1950 Twenty-Third Graduate Fortnight on the "Musculo-Skeletal System" at which in addition to the usual evening lectures, morning panels, hospital clinics and scientific exhibits, there were arranged six televised telecolor programmes of surgical operations. These were acclaimed as of great teaching value.

The Committee on Medical Education, ever-watchful for what is new and important, arranged a special conference and round table discussion on cortisone and ACTH in which there took part many of the pioneers in the discovery and clinical application of these new and spectacular therapeutic agents. It was from a part of this conference that our first FM radio broadcast was made.

Under the auspices of the Committees on Medical Information and Medical Education an informal conference with the Deans of the five medical schools in the Metropolitan area was held to discuss ways and means of making the Academy with all its facilities better known and more useful to their students. As a result a plan is being worked out whereby all of the freshmen in these five schools will, each year, be extended an invitation to visit the Library, meet the Officers and Fellows and have explained to them the ways in which we can be helpful. They will come in small groups each made up of students from all five of the schools so that they may fraternize and learn from each other what goes on in schools other than their own. There is also under consideration the possibility of conducting for these students a short course in the history of medicine planned along lines with more interest and appeal than those generally given. Our great collection of historical lore in the library and our ability to secure the proper speakers would seem to make this eminently practical.

Last year in my annual report I told of the symposium which was

held in conjunction with the New York County Lawyers Association on the subject of "Law, Medicine and the Unstable Family." Always on the outlook for new contacts for the interchange of ideas, the Committee on Medical Information recently organized a conference with ministers of religion to explore the possibilities of greater coöperation between the clergy and the medical profession in treating the sick, especially the sick in mind. Thirty members of the clergy of all faiths and denominations and twenty-seven interested physicians, together with committee members took part. The transactions of this conference are in the course of preparation for publication. They should supply a basis on which to build new methods of approach to many forms of human distress.

That the public is interested in and concerned about problems of the mind and their impact upon human welfare is shown by the overflowing attendance at the Laity Lectures whenever these treat of a psychological or related subject. We are all coming to realize more and more how important is the psychological approach. The subject deliberated at our last Eastern States Health Conference was the Psychological Dynamics of Health Education. The committee on Public Health Relations is at present exploring means of lessening the incidence of mental illness by community action. Today we are preparing ourselves for the possibility of major disaster from atomic attack. In densely populated areas such as New York it is conceivable that should such attack come, there would be more casualties from panic than from the direct action of the bomb. The Committee on Medical Information has therefore begun to plan a conference of those with expert knowledge to consider the subject of panic and to formulate methods of minimising it by mass enlightenment and conditioning of the public. In this it is hoped to enlist the coöperation of our municipal departments, health and educational agencies and Civil Defense Authorities.

In the broad domain of Public Health the Committee on Public Health Relations has given detailed consideration to a number of subjects, many of them referred to it by our various health agencies. The Study of Neonatal Mortality is well into its second phase which is concerned with the causes of neonatal deaths and the possibilities of their prevention. A subcommittee of nine obstetricians, nine pediatricians and three pathologists acting with Dr. Chandler Foot as Director and five field workers makes a detailed study of each death reported. It is ex-

pected that the study will be completed by May of this year and that the report will be ready shortly thereafter.

A prolonged study of the relationships between funeral directors and hospitals concerning autopsies resulted in the preparation of a "Manual of Procedures upon the Occurrence of a Death in Hospitals of the Metropolitan Area," and also a wall chart indicating acceptable autopsy room procedure. These two documents were published under a subvention from the United Hospital Fund and distributed to all hospitals in the Greater New York area. The usefulness of this work is attested by the fact that after receiving the initial copies, hospitals requested large numbers of these pamphlets. The first edition of 5,000 copies has been almost exhausted, and again with a grant from the United Hospital Fund, a second printing was ordered. Out of the work of this group has come also the formation of a joint committee representing the Academy, the Greater New York Hospital Association, the New York Pathological Society, and the Metropolitan Funeral Directors' Association to follow up the recommendations in the Manual.

The Commissioner of Hospitals requested the Committee's advice as to ways in which the city's provision of convalescent care for its charges could be made more effective. The Committee's report suggested that the Department of Hospitals consider incorporating convalescent units in any new hospitals that may be built, and that in the meantime, ample use be made of existing institutions, and that home care be tried whenever possible. Changes in the Department's procedure to facilitate admission of patients to convalescent institutions, to simplify the financial arrangements, and to broaden the basis for approval of convalescent care were recommended.

Other matters which the Committee has studied and on some of which it has issued reports were the Care of Mental Patients in Proprietary Hospitals, Electro-shock therapy, Air pollution and Smoke control, Practical nurses for Home Service, Street Cleaning, Fluoridation of City Water. These will be published in the annual report.

A great deal of the time of the Committee was devoted to various legislative proposals with public health implications. Among other things, it dealt with the establishment of a state mental health council comparable to the Advisory Health Council of the State Department of Health, which was approved; it opposed the amending of the Medical Practice Act by additions proposed on behalf of radiologists; it endorsed the

bill for licensing of physiotherapists and one for the lowering of the age of licensure for practical nurses from 19 to 18, it was in favor of a provision for indeterminate prison sentences and psychiatric examinations for sex offenders. It opposed a bill for the licensing of chiropractors. It took an active part in advocating legislation which would have made possible the utilization of unwanted dogs for medical research. It favored a bill for a year's study by a legislative committee of the problems of alcoholism.

The enumeration of these items give you some indication of the amount and importance of the work performed by the Committee on Public Health Relations with Dr. George Baehr as its Chairman and Dr. E. H. L. Corwin as its Executive Secretary.

The Committee on Medicine and the Changing Order has continued to hold a watching brief during the year. It has viewed with satisfaction the gradual implementation of the recommendations made in former years on the ways and means of making available to a larger and larger public all that modern medicine can provide. It hails the ever-increasing enrollment in voluntary health insurance plans and the growing enlightenment of the public as to their value as opposed to compulsory national health insurance. In this matter of informing and building up public opinion the medical profession has taken a forward step.

We recognize that our profession, along with other professions and callings, must conform in its practices to an over all pattern of national policies and that it must fit into the general economic and social picture. What most of us object to is that the profession of medicine which stands so high in accomplishment; which has been making such spectacular progress in scientific research and in its application for the benefit of the whole population, should have been singled out as the stalking horse for an adventure into the dangerous and largely unexplored realm of state socialism and bureaucratic control.

The New York Academy of Medicine throughout its one hundred years of existence has ever had before it one great aim, the promotion of medical education and research to the end that it should be applied in the best possible way for the benefit of the individual and of the people at large. The Academy has moved with the times. It has never been static. It recognizes that changing conditions call for new methods of meeting them and it stands ready today as it has in the past to explore and to advise on every new approach to the problem of national health. The

comprehensive character of its fellowship fits it for this task and the objectivity of its approach to every investigation it has ever conducted is a guarantee that the problem will be thoroughly and fearlessly explored.

The Library, our most precious possession, continues to cater to a great number and variety of readers, about half of whom are other than doctors of medicine. This large lay reading public might be further increased were it more generally known that, in coöperation with the public library system of New York City, the Library is free to all. Explanatory circulars to this effect have recently been distributed to other libraries and to interested individuals. Whilst ours is thus a free public library its whole expense is borne by the Academy. Expenditures have risen steadily year by year owing to the increasing number of books published and their augmented price, together with rises in salaries and other costs of administration. A library must always continue to expand. The Committee on Library and Dr. Howard Craig have been studying ways and means of adding to the stacks and of providing better working space for staff and readers. To meet all of this it is very necessary that we seek new sources of income, a drive for which is contemplated in the coming year. In this we must enlist all of our Fellows.

We acknowledge the generosity of those who in the past year, under the auspices of the Friends of the Rare Book Room have donated valuable volumes of historical interest, the acquisition of which would ordinarily be out with our budget limits. An important working acquisition was a set of 209 volumes of the Library of Congress Catalogue of Cards, the greatest of American Bibliographies. Its very considerable cost was met by members of the Committee on Library personally and through their friends.

A new departure has been an experiment in library coöperation. Late in 1949 the Academy Library initiated a series of consultations between the librarians of seven New York institutions concerned with the literature of psychoanalysis in the hope that a survey might show possibilities of economising on purchases by minimising duplication and at the same time increasing representation of the literature. This whole enterprise constitutes what may be the first attempt at a working co-ordination among libraries by a partial pooling of their resources to provide less costly and yet wider service. The idea originated with Miss Janet Doe, our librarian, who has made herself responsible for working out the details. I pay tribute to her for the very efficient way in which

she administers this and all our other library activities. She and her associates have arranged a variety of exhibitions during the year such as that of Atlases of Anatomy published up to the year 1700; all of the literature bearing on cortisone and ACTH; an exhibit on "The Effects of Atomic Weapons."

Of considerable local interest was the showing of books written by New York City physicians issued in 1949; its sixty-nine titles (to which several more were added in the course of the exhibit) represent, according to Miss Doe, some 15 per cent of the medical books published in the United States in 1949, and are a crude index of the amount of work New York physicians are doing. Such an output reflects the fact that New York has become an outstanding medical center.

In 1950 The New York Academy of Medicine itself has published four volumes—The Biological Foundations of Health Education; The Social and Biological Challenge of the Aging Population; The Pathogenesis and Pathology of Viral Diseases. The first two are the transactions of the Eastern States Health Conferences of 1948 and of 1949 held under the auspices of the Committee on Medical Information and the third, edited by Dr. John G. Kidd, is the work of the Section of Microbiology. The fourth volume entitled "The Future of Medicine" incorporates the Laity Lectures of the 1949-50 Season.

Over all the activities which I have mentioned and many others the Council has kept a watchful and directing eye as has the Board of Trustees over our finances. To the latter and especially to its Finance Committee we are much beholden for the management of our invested funds. As these amount to over six million dollars this is a great responsibility. That their planning and administration have been wise is evidenced by the fact that in the last year as in the two years previously, we have lived within our income. Credit for this must also be given to our Director, Dr. Howard Reid Craig, who scrutinises all expenditures and manages to make ends meet, not only without loss of efficiency but indeed with an ever-increasing expansion of our services.

On behalf of the whole Fellowship I tender to Dr. Craig and the other Officers, to the Council and to the Trustees our sincere thanks. On my own part I wish to convey to them my gratitude for the innumerable ways through which they have contributed to making my term as President one of the happiest, most rewarding, and most memorable epochs in my life.